

Appln No. 10/849,298
Amdt date September 22, 2004


REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1-19 are pending. Claims 1-3, 5-11, 13, 15-17 are amended to correct grammatical errors, and new claims 18 and 19 are added. Entry of the foregoing amendments prior to examination is respectfully requested.

Due to the number of amendments, a substitute specification pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.125 and MPEP § 608.01(q) is submitted herewith to facilitate the prosecution of this application. No new matter is added. The substitute specification is accompanied by a marked-up copy showing the changes between the original application, as filed, and the substitute specification. Applicant respectfully request that the substitute specification be entered in this case.

Respectfully submitted,
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NOISE SUPPRESSING METHOD AND APPARATUS THEREOF

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application claims priority to Japanese Patent
5 Application No. 2003-145727, filed May 23, 2003, the entire contents
of which are incorporated herein by reference.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates to a method and apparatus to suppress
10 optical noise components within a signal band.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

In an optical transmission system, specifically in an optical
amplifier transmission system, amplified spontaneous emission
15 (ASE) noises are accumulated due to the optical amplification in
the course of optical transmission. The ASE noises within a band
different from the signal wavelength band are easily removed by
a band limited optical filter. However, this type of band limited
optical filter is incapable of removing the ASE noises being
20 superimposed on the signal wavelength band.

An ASE noise accumulated within a signal band deteriorates
an optical signal to noise ratio, i.e. OSNR, of a signal light.
Fig. 2 shows a spectrum example of a signal light in which an ASE
noise is accumulated. The horizontal axis expresses the
25 wavelength, and the vertical axis expresses the optical intensity.
The solid line shows the optical intensity of the signal component,
and the broken line shows the optical intensity of the noise
component. However, the actual intensity of the signal component
is obtained by subtracting the intensity of the noise component

expressed by the broken line from the intensity of the signal light expressed by the solid line. The noise light within the signal band deteriorates a bit error rate, i.e. BER of the signal light.

5 SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

According to one embodiment of the ~~subject~~-invention, an input light including a signal light and a noise light within a signal wavelength band of the signal light is divided into a first component with a polarization parallel to a polarization direction
10 of the signal light and a second component with a polarization orthogonal to the polarization direction of the first component. The first component is supplied into a first arm and the second component into a second arm. The optical phase of the second component in the second arm is shifted so that the optical phase
15 of the second component in the second arm ~~relatively~~ differs by π from the optical phase of the first component in the first arm, that is, ~~so~~ shifted in such a way that the optical phase of the second component (the noise component) in the second arm becomes opposite to the optical phase of the noise component included in
20 the first component in the first arm. Thereafter, the first component output from the first arm and the second component output from the second arm are combined. While the ~~combination~~ combining is performed, the noise lights included in the first and second components are forced to interfere with each other.

25 Basically, the first component in the first arm is composed of the signal light and a half of the noise component, and the second component in the second arm is composed of the other half of the noise component. As the second component is reversed in its optical phase and combined with the first component, the noise
30 components within the signal band are forced to interfere with

each other to become weak. Consequently, the noise light within the signal band is suppressed.

Preferably, the polarization of the input light should be adjusted in advance of ~~that~~ the input light ~~is being~~ divided into
5 the first component and the second component. Because of this operation, the signal light is precisely assigned to the first component.

By using a spectral delay which has a delay amount to differ according to a wavelength in order to shift the optical phase of
10 the second component, it is possible to shift the optical phase of a noise component by a desired amount in each wavelength within the signal band. This makes the interference between the noise components at the combination more effectively.

In addition, preferably, the polarization of the second
15 component in the second arm is adjusted ~~so as~~ to maximize an OSNR of the combined light. With this operation, it is possible to reduce the influence from the polarization fluctuation of the second component in the second arm. More specifically, the polarization of the second component in the second arm is adjusted ~~so as~~ to
20 minimize the intensity of the component with the polarization orthogonal to the polarization direction of the signal light included in the combined light. ~~Or~~ Alternatively, the polarization direction of the second component in the second arm is adjusted ~~so as~~ to maximize a degree of polarization of the combined light.

Furthermore, preferably, the combined light is divided into
25 a third component with the polarization parallel to the polarization direction of the signal light included in the combined light and a fourth component the polarization orthogonal to the polarization direction of the third component, the polarization
30 of the first component in the first arm is adjusted ~~so as~~ to maximize

the intensity of a base repetition frequency component of the signal obtained from the third component, and the polarization of the second component in the second arm is adjusted ~~so as to~~ to minimize the intensity of a low frequency component obtained from the fourth component. With this operation, the influence from the polarization fluctuation in the first and second arms can be reduced.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The above and other objects, features and advantages of the present invention will be apparent from the following detailed description of explanatory embodiments of the invention in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, in which:

Fig. 1 is a schematic block diagram of an explanatory embodiment according to the invention;

Fig. 2 is a spectrum example of a signal light in which an ASE noise is accumulated in the signal band;

Fig. 3 is a spectrum example of a light in ~~an a first arm~~ 1 which is separated from ~~a the PBS 24 of Fig. 1;~~

Fig. 4 is a spectrum example of a light in ~~an a second arm~~ 2 split by ~~a the PBS 24 of Fig. 1;~~

Fig. 5 is a spectrum example of an output light from ~~a the~~ combiner 48 of Fig. 1;

Fig. 6 is a schematic block diagram of a feedback control system to control ~~a the~~ polarization controller 22 of Fig. 1;

Fig. 7 is a schematic block diagram of a first feedback control system to control ~~a the~~ polarization controller 46 of Fig. 1;

Fig. 8 is a schematic block diagram of a second feedback control system to control the polarization controller ~~46 of Fig.~~

1; and

Fig. 9 is a schematic block diagram of a third feedback control system to control the polarization controller ~~46~~ of Fig. 1.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

5 Explanatory embodiments of the invention are explained below in detail with reference to the drawings.

Fig. 1 shows a schematic block diagram of an explanatory embodiment according to one embodiment of the invention. An optical transmitter 10 outputs a signal light of linear polarization
10 into an optical fiber transmission line 12. The optical fiber transmission line 12 typically comprises an optical repeater amplifier transmission line including one or more optical amplifiers. The signal light propagated in the optical fiber transmission line 12 enters an optical receiver 14. To make it
15 more easily understandable, the receiving configuration of a single wavelength is illustrated as the optical receiver 14.

The configuration and operation of the optical receiver 14 is explained below. An optical bandpass filter (OBPF) 20 extracts a component of signal wavelength band out of the input light from
20 the optical fiber transmission line 12. The output light from the OBPF 20 is applied to a polarization controller 22. As shown in Fig. 2, the spectrum of the output light from the OBPF 20 shows a spectrum wherein an ASE noise is accumulated in the signal wavelength band. The passband width of the OBPF 20 is for example
25 approximately 1 nm.

The polarization controller 22 controls a polarization direction of the output light from the OBPF 20 so that the polarization direction of the output light, especially the signal light from the OBPF 20 coincides with a specific polarization
30 direction of a polarization beam splitter (PBS) 24. The PBS 24

splits the output light from the polarization controller 22 into two orthogonal polarization components and applies one of the polarization components (e.g. P-wave), namely a first component into an arm 1 (branch 1) and the other (e.g. S-wave), namely a
5 second component to an arm 2(branch 2).

A divider 26 in the arm 1 applies a part of the P-wave component from the PBS 24 into an optoelectric (O/E) converter 28 and the rest of the P-wave component to half wavelength plate 32. The half wavelength plate 32 converts the P-wave from the divider 26
10 into an orthogonal S-wave.

A controller 30 controls the polarization controller 22 according to the output from the O/E converter 28 so as to maximize the output from the O/E converter 28. As a result of this polarization control, the PBS 24 applies the first component, which
15 comprises the signal light and ASE noise component with a polarization direction (P-wave) identical to the polarization direction of the signal light, into the arm 1 and the second component, which comprises the ASE noise component with a polarization direction (S-wave) orthogonal to the polarization direction of
20 the signal light, into the arm 2.

Since the polarization of the ASE noise accumulated within the signal wavelength band in the optical transmission line 12 is not fixed, both of the ASE noise component (P-wave) in the arm 1 and ASE component (S-wave) in the arm 2 split by the PBS 24 do
25 not necessarily have the same intensity. The ratio between the ASE noise component in the arm 1 and the ASE noise component in the arm 2 varies with time. However, ~~in the~~ on average, on a long-term basis, the intensity of the ASE noise components in both arms 1 and 2 becomes almost the same.

30 According to the structure up to this point, the ASE noise

within the signal wavelength band is split into two portions and one portion is applied to the arm 1 and the other to the arm 2. Fig. 3 shows a spectrum example of the polarization component in the arm 1, and Fig. 4 shows a spectrum example of the polarization component in the arm 2. In Figs. 3 and 4, the horizontal axis expresses the wavelength and the vertical axis expresses the intensity. In the average on a long-term basis, the intensity of the ASE noise in both arms 1 and 2 becomes a half of the intensity of the ASE noise included in the output light from the OBPF 20.

10 In the arm 1, an attenuator 34 for level-adjusting and a delay 36 for time-adjusting are further disposed. The order of the half wavelength plate 32, the attenuator 34, and the delay 36 is not limited to the illustrated example.

15 In the arm 2, an optical circulator 38 is disposed. The ASE noise component (S-wave) from the PBS 24 enters a port A of the optical circulator 38 and outputs through a port B into a spectral delay 40 which has delay characteristics depending on a wavelength. The spectral delay 40 comprises a spectral lens 42 and a mirror 44 to send back the lights of respective wavelengths divided by the spectral lens 42 to the spectral lens 42. Since the optical path length between the spectral lens 42 and the mirror 44 is varied depending on a wavelength, the spectral delay 40 can give wavelength depending delay to the input light. The amount of the wavelength depending delay of the spectral delay 40, namely the amount of the optical phase shift, is set so that the optical phase of the second component (the ASE noise) output from the arm 2 relatively differs by π from the optical phase of the ASE noise included in the first component output from the arm 1 in a combiner 48, which is explained below. The spectral delay 40 shifts the optical phase of the ASE noise from the optical circulator 38 according to its

wavelength and sends back the ASE noise with the shifted optical phase to the optical circulator 38.

An optical device capable of performing such function as the spectral delay 40 is for example a virtually imaged phased array (VIPA) variable dispersion compensator described in H. Ooi et al., "40-Gb/s WDM Transmission With Virtually Imaged Phased Array (VIPA) Variable Dispersion Compensators", IEEE Journal of Light wave Technology, vol. 20, No. 12, 2002.

The distance $L(\lambda)$ between the spectral lens 42 and the mirror 44 of the spectral delay 40 is expressed as the following equation;

$$L(\lambda) = ((\lambda - \lambda_0) / 2 + L_0) / 2,$$

where

$$L_0 = 0.5 \lambda_0 + \Delta L,$$

and ΔL expresses the difference between the optical path length of the arm 1 which is from the PBS 24 to the combiner 48 and the optical path length of the arm 2 which is from the PBS 24 to the combiner 48 except the optical path length between the spectral lens 42 and the mirror 44 in the spectral delay 40. λ_0 is a reference wavelength of the spectral delay 40 and identical to the wavelength λ_s , for example. Accordingly, when the light propagated through the arm 1 and the light propagated through the arm 2 are combined as described later on condition that the distance $L(\lambda)$ between the spectral lens 42 and the mirror 44 is adjusted depending on the wavelength λ , the ASE noise superimposed on the signal wavelength band can be reduced by 6 dB on the average.

The ASE noise component delayed by the spectral delay 40 by the amount depending on its wavelength enters the port B of the optical circulator 38 and outputs through a port C into a polarization controller 46. The polarization controller 46 has the same function ~~with~~ as that of the polarization controller 22

and controls the polarization of the output light from the port C of the optical circulator 38 under the control of a controller 50.

5 The combiner 48 combines the output light from the delay
36, namely the first component output from the arm 1, with the
output light from the polarization controller 46, namely the second
component output from the arm 2. ~~Owing to~~ Based on the function
of the half wavelength plate 32 in the arm 1, the polarization
direction of the first component becomes basically the same with
10 the polarization direction of the second component in the arm 2.
Accordingly, the noise component included in the first component
is capable of interfering with the second component (the noise
component) when they are combined by the combiner 48. Since the
optical phase of the ASE noise in the arm 2 is reversed or shifted
15 by π by the spectral delay 40, the ASE noise component is reduced
after the combination by the combiner 48. The ASE noise is reduced
by 6 dB on the average. Fig. 5 shows a spectrum example of the
output light from the combiner 48. The horizontal axis expresses
the wavelength, and the vertical axis expresses the intensity.
20 Because of the interference, the ASE noises within the signal
wavelength band are reduced drastically, by approximately 6 dB
on the average.

 A splitter 52 splits the output light from the combiner 48
into two portions and applies one portion to an optoelectric
25 converter 54 and the other to the controller 50. The optoelectric
converter 54 converts the signal light including the ASE noise
from the splitter 52 into an electric signal. A data demodulator
56 demodulates ~~a data out of from~~ the electric signal output from
the optoelectric converter 54.

30 When optical time division multiplexing is used, a

demultiplexer to demultiplex time-division-multiplexed optical signals is disposed in front of the optoelectric converter 54.

The controller 50 controls the polarization controller 46 according to the signal light with the suppressed ASE noise from the splitter 52 so as to maximize the OSNR of the signal light.

Although the half wavelength plate 32 is disposed in the arm 1 in the configuration shown in Fig. 1, it is also applicable to dispose a similar half wavelength plate in the arm 2. In addition, it is applicable that the polarization controller 46 has a function corresponding to that of a half wavelength plate in the arm 2. Furthermore, it is applicable to dispose a polarization rotator such as a Faraday rotator on each of the arm 1 and 2 so that the polarization directions of the first and second components become basically the same in the combiner 48.

Fig. 6 shows a schematic block diagram of a feedback control system for the polarization controller 22. A bandpass filter (BPF) 60 extracts a base repetition frequency component, namely a clock frequency component, of the signal light out of the output from the optoelectric converter 28. An electric intensity detector 62 detects the amplitude of the clock frequency component extracted by the BPF 60 and outputs a voltage signal indicating the amplitude. An A/D converter 64 converts the output voltage signal from the electric intensity detector 62 into a digital signal and applies the digital signal to a computer 66. The computer 66 generates a digital control signal for the polarization controller 22 to make the output value from the A/D converter 64 higher and applies the generated signal into a D/A converter 68. The D/A converter 68 converts the digital control signal from the computer 66 into an analogue control signal and applies the analogue control signal to the polarization controller 22.

In such a feedback control loop, the computer 66 controls the polarization controller 22 so as to maximize the output voltage from the A/D converter 64, that is, to maximize the intensity of the signal light in the arm 1. Accordingly, every signal light
5 included in the output light from the OBPF 20 flows into the arm 1 as ~~far-long~~ as its polarization is kept ~~being~~-linear.

Fig. 7 shows a schematic block diagram of a first feedback control system to control the polarization controller 46. A polarizer 70 extracts a polarization component orthogonal to the
10 polarization direction of the signal light out of the signal light with the suppressed ASE noise from the splitter 52. Since the polarization direction of the signal light on the output of the combiner 48 is already known, it is easy to dispose the polarizer 70 so as to be capable of extracting the polarization orthogonal
15 to the polarization direction of the signal light.

An optical intensity detector 72 detects the intensity of the output light from the polarizer 70. An A/D converter 74 converts the analogue output from the optical intensity detector 72 into a digital signal and applies the digital signal to a computer 76.
20 The computer 76 generates a digital control signal for the polarization controller 46 to lower the detected optical intensity by the optical intensity detector 72. A D/A converter 78 converts the digital control signal into an analogue control signal and applies the analogue control signal to a control terminal of the
25 polarization controller 46. The polarization controller 46 controls the polarization of the input signal according to the control signal from the D/A converter 78.

With such a feedback control loop, the computer 76 controls the polarization direction of the ASE noise in the arm 2 using
30 the polarization controller 46 so as to minimize the ASE noise

with the polarization orthogonal to the polarization of the signal light on the output of the combiner 48.

The reasons why the polarization controller 46 is controlled so as to maximize the OSNR of the output light from the combiner 48 according to the configuration shown in Fig. 7 are explained below. That is, the component detected by the optical intensity detector 72 is a component of the signal light in the arm 2 with a polarization orthogonal to the polarization of the signal light in the arm 1 and does not contribute to the interference (the suppressing process of the noise) between both arms in the combiner 48. Accordingly, the optical intensity detector 72 finally detects a component remained as noise. To control the polarization controller 46 ~~so as to~~ minimize the residual component is to adjust the polarization of the signal light in the arm 1 and the polarization of the signal light in the arm 2 so as to be parallel from each other when the combination is performed in the combiner 48, ~~and, therefore, it means to obtain.~~ In other words, obtaining the maximum interference effect such that the noise included in the output light from the combiner 48 is fully suppressed.

Fig. 8 shows a schematic block diagram of a second feedback control system to control the polarization controller 46. A degree of polarization (DOP) measuring device 80 measures a DOP of the output light from the splitter 52, namely a DOP of the output light from the combiner 48. An A/D converter 82 converts the measured result of the DOP measuring device 80 into a digital signal and applies the digital signal to a computer 84. The computer 84 generates a digital signal for the polarization controller 46 to increase the DOP value measured by the DOP measuring device 80. A D/A converter 86 converts the digital control signal into an analogue control signal and applies the analogue signal to the

control terminal of the polarization controller 46. The polarization controller 46 controls the polarization of the input signal according to the control signal from the D/A converter 86.

According to such a feedback control loop, the computer 84
5 controls the polarization direction of the ASE noise in the arm 2 using the polarization controller 46 ~~so as to~~ maximize the DOP of the output light from the combiner 48. For instance, when the polarization of the light in the arm 1 fluctuates, the polarization state of the output light from the combiner 48 also fluctuates
10 accordingly. By controlling the polarization of the light (ASE noise) in the arm 2 ~~so as to~~ maximize the DOP of the output light from the combiner 48, the OSNR of the output light from the combiner 48 can be controlled being maximum, even if the polarization state of the light (the signal light and ASE noise) in the arm 1 fluctuates.

15 The reasons why the polarization controller 46 is controlled to maximize the OSNR of the output light from the combiner 48 according to the configuration shown in Fig. 8 are described below. That is, the lights in the arms 1 and 2 are linear polarization components orthogonal to each other split by the PBS 24. Since
20 the polarization state of each polarization component is linear, the DOP of each polarization component is approximately 100 %. Accordingly, when the combiner 48 combines the lights from the arms 1 and 2 on condition that the planes of (linear) polarizations of the arms 1 and 2 are parallel from each other, that is, on condition
25 that the maximum interference effect is obtained, the DOP of the combined signal light is almost 100 %. However, when the lights from the arms 1 and 2 are combined on condition that the planes of (linear) polarizations of the arms 1 and 2 are not parallel from each other, the DOP of the combined signal light is reduced
30 because the combined signal light ends up having two orthogonal

polarization components. Therefore, the control of the polarization controller 46 to maximize the DOP_x means ~~to parallel making~~ the polarization of the light in the arm 2 and the polarization of the light in the arm 2 parallel and thus ~~to obtain~~ obtaining the maximum interference effects. This also means ~~to maximize maximizing the suppression of the noise~~ suppression in the output signal light from the combiner 48.

Fig. 9 shows a schematic block diagram of a third feedback control system to control the polarization controller 46. This configuration is effective on condition that the fluctuation of polarization state of the first component composed of the signal light and ASE noise in the arm 1 cannot be neglected. A polarization controller 90 is disposed in the arm 1 to reduce the influence of the fluctuation of polarization state of the first component in the arm 1. The controller 50a has a function to control both polarization controllers 46 and 90.

A polarization beam splitter 92 splits the light from the splitter 52 into a polarization component of the signal light and an orthogonal polarization component and applies the former to an optoelectric converter 94a and the latter to an optoelectric converter 94b. Each of the optoelectric converters 94a and 94b converts the input light into an electric signal with the corresponding intensity.

The output from the optoelectric converter 94a is applied to a bandpass filter (BPF) 96a and the output from the optoelectric converter 94b is applied to a lowpass filter (LPF) 96b. The BPF 96a extracts a base repetition frequency (the clock frequency) component of the signal transmitted from the optical transmitter 10 to the optical receiver 14 out of the output from the optoelectric converters 94a. An electric intensity detector 98a detects the

electric intensity, namely the amplitude of the output from the BPF 96a. The LPF 96b detects the DC or low frequency component, namely the noise component out of the output from the optoelectric converters 94b. An electric intensity detector 98b detects the electric intensity, namely the amplitude of the output from the LPF 96b.

The intensity of the signal component after the suppression of the ASE noise is detected using the optoelectric converter 94a, the BPF 96a, and the electric intensity detector 98a. Furthermore, the intensity of the noise remained after the suppression of the ASE noise is detected using the optoelectric converter 94b, the LPF 96b, and the electric intensity detector 98b.

The detected result by the electric intensity detector 98a is converted into a digital signal by an A/D converter 100a and applied to a computer 102. Similarly, the detected result by the electric intensity detector 98b is converted into a digital signal by an A/D converter 100b and applied to the computer 102.

The computer 102 generates a digital control signal for the polarization controller 90 so as to increase the intensity of the output from the electric intensity detector 98a, namely the intensity of the clock frequency component and also generates a digital control signal for the polarization controller 46 so as to decrease the intensity of the output from the electric intensity detector 98b, namely the intensity of the noise component. Each digital control signal is converted into an analogue control signal by D/A converter 104, 106 and applied to the control terminal of the polarization controller 46, 90. The polarization controller 46, 90 controls the polarization of the input signal according to the control signal from the D/A converter 104, 106.

According to such a feedback loop, the computer 102 controls

the polarization direction of the first component in the arm 1 using the polarization controller 90 so as to maximize the intensity of the clock frequency component after the suppression of the ASE noise and also controls the polarization direction of the ASE noise in the arm 2 using the polarization controller 46 so as to minimize the intensity of the noise after the suppression of the ASE noise.

In the configuration shown in Fig. 9, by maximizing the signal clock component detected by the BPF 96a, the signal component included in the output signal light from the combiner 48 can be maximized in such a ~~condition-way~~ that the polarization state of the signal component is kept ~~being~~ constant. On the other hand, by minimizing the electric intensity detected by the LPF 96b, the noise component in the arm 2 having the polarization direction different from the polarization direction of the signal component can be minimized. Because the polarization directions of the lights in both arms 1 and 2 are controlled, it is possible to coincide the polarization directions of the lights in the arms 1 and 2 ~~at the combination~~ by the combiner 48, even if the polarization directions of the lights in the arms 1 and 2 are fluctuated. Consequently, the OSNR on the output of the combiner 48 can be maximized.

In wavelength division multiplexing (WDM) transmission, after a WDM signal is demultiplexed into respective signal wavelengths, a receiver having the same configuration with the optical receiver 14 can be used. However, a wavelength demultiplexer to demultiplex a WDM signal light into signal lights with respective wavelengths should be disposed instead or in front of the optical bandpass filter 20.

As readily understandable from the aforementioned explanation, according to the invention, the noise accumulated

within a signal band is effectively suppressed and thus the OSNR is improved.

While the invention has been described with reference to the specific embodiment, it will be apparent to those skilled in the art that various changes and modifications can be made to the
5 specific embodiment without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention as defined in the claims.

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